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# Extension in Action

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## Residue Avoidance Program—A Cooperative Effort with the Food Safety and Inspection Service

### Background

American agriculture makes extensive use of pesticides, drugs, and other chemicals as aids in maintaining high levels of production of the most plentiful, healthful, safe, and reasonably-priced food in the world. However, new analytical methods have revealed the presence of some chemicals in the environment and chemical residues in food. Concern has led to government actions to control these chemicals. Meat and poultry inspection programs were strengthened to prevent the marketing of meat and poultry containing potentially harmful residues. In 1978, the Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) requested assistance from the Extension Service to educate producers in the use of sulfas in swine. Subsequently, swine sulfa residue violations decreased from approximately 13 percent in 1977 to 4.8 percent in 1982.

Extension Service also contributed to the Swab Test on Premises (STOP) program in 1979 to reduce drug residues in meat. In February 1982, FSIS and the Extension Service signed a cooperative agreement for a Residue Avoidance Program (RAP). The agreement calls for the "joint design and collection of data necessary for developing a management program which will provide added insurance that animals and poultry coming to slaughter will not be considered adulterated under the Federal Meat Inspection Act or the Poultry Products Inspection Act."

### What is RAP?

The Residue Avoidance Program is a cooperative effort between FSIS, ES and industry, and is aimed at helping farmers and others involved in animal and poultry production reduce the potential for drug and chemical residues in their products. Through good management practices, RAP shows producers how to identify points in their production systems where animals might become contaminated, and helps these producers plan and carry out preventive steps to make residue violations unlikely.

### Purpose

The purpose of the Extension Residue Avoidance Program is to:

- Examine livestock and poultry systems to determine the critical points of control for residue avoidance.
- Develop management recommendations to eliminate factors contributing to residue violations, and
- Educate producers and others in livestock and poultry industries to avoid residues and improve the safety of our meat and poultry supplies.

The educational program is divided into three phases—program planning and development, pilot projects and data collection, and implementation of educational programming. Eventually, the program will involve more than 1,000 State Extension administrators, agricultural program leaders, and specialists in animal science, dairy science, poultry science, veterinary medicine and other disciplines. The Cooperative Extension Services of the land-grant universities will reach into nearly all of the 3,150 counties in the United States. County Extension agents play a major role in RAP. Nearly all U.S. livestock and poultry producers have received or will be receiving the information and management techniques they need to avoid marketing violative animals.

## Some Key Features

Residue avoidance is a shared program with other agencies. FSIS is providing funds to the Extension Service for state projects. In addition, the Food and Drug Administration is participating because of its responsibility in proper drug use and the prevention of contaminants that adulterate foods. Other cooperating agencies include the Economic Research Service, the Agricultural Research Service and the Cooperative State Research Service.

Residue avoidance involves the state-federal partnership and industry. The Cooperative Extension Services and other resources of land-grant universities have responded to the needs of action and regulatory agencies and the public concern for food safety. These educational programs provide a highly cost-effective method of preventing violations. The Cooperative Extension system has a long history of working cooperatively with its clientele. RAP is a self-help program for these clientele and is aimed at giving them information and management techniques they need to have to avoid marketing violative animals.

## Educational Projects

Extension Service has received \$2.39 million from FSIS for State Extension Services to use in developing educational projects. To date, 49 projects in 33 states have been funded. These projects include data collection and development of information about residues and residue avoidance; computerization of this information; identifying problems and critical points of control; demonstrations to develop and prove management recommendations; educational models, and others that are contributing to national and other state programs. To tell the RAP story, most states have developed media materials, including video tapes, publications, demonstrations and slide/tape shows.

The emphasis is on residue avoidance or prevention. However, some approved projects encourage industry or producer testing that might keep residue-containing animals off the market. Some projects identify residue problems that also lead to identification of sources and development of management recommendations to prevent future violations.

## Industry Involvement

The success of the Residue Avoidance Program depends on cooperation, coordination and acceptance by the livestock industry. Consequently, it is important that industry leaders have input into the program. To this end, farm organizations, commodity groups, livestock associations, government agencies and others are actively involved in coordinating industry support.

## Information Available

The Food Safety and Inspection Service has a number of free educational materials about RAP. For a list of these and an order blank, write to USDA, Food Safety and Inspection Service, Room 1163-S, Washington, D. C. 20250



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